Abstract of the Disclosure

User interactions with a media distribution system such as cable television are monitored and used to infer programming or commercial preferences, preferably without the user being aware that their interactions are being monitored or used for such purposes. Various user interactions may be recovered in this way, including changes in channel selections, as well as the amount of time a viewer spends, or does not spend, on a particular program or commercial. Information can also be gathered as to when a viewer changes the channel relative to selecting that program, which might be indicative of when that individual has "lost interest" in the program or a commercial message. If the user is interacting with an on-screen program guide, or schedule guide, or other type of menu, information is gathered regarding the interaction such as which entries are selected for further information, which entries are selected for immediate viewing, which entries are selected for future recording. In the preferred embodiment, the information regarding user preferences is delivered to a head end, service providers, advertisers, or other interested parties by way of a two-way cable system. However, the invention may be used in conjunction with return paths such as a modem or internet connection, two-way cable, a dedicated dial-up line, or other operative communication path. In any case, information regarding viewer interactions, whether or not with a program or schedule guide, may be stored locally at the site of the viewer, and transmitted to a different location in a single burst, or communicated on a piecemeal basis when the interactions occur.